

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 02174 042143Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 MCT-01 HA-05 AID-05 CCO-00 FBOE-00
PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 SP-02 OC-06 OPR-02 PA-01
USSS-00 CA-01 A-01 SCS-06 OMB-01 SS-15 SY-05
/103 W

-----109731 051021Z /21

R 042105Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7827
INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE QUITO 2174

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PORS, EC
SUBJECT: PUBLIC DISORDER FOLLOWS BUS FARE INCREASES

REF: QUITO 1009, 1033

1. APRIL 3 MARKED THE SECOND STRAIGHT DAY OF PUBLIC DISORDERS IN QUITO PROVOKED BY UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS PROTESTING A 40 PERCENT INCREASE IN BUS FARES. THE INCREASE FROM ONE SUCRE (ABOUT \$.04 US) TO 1.4 SUCRES WAS AUTHORIZED BY THE GOE FOLLOWING RECENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CHAUFFEURS' FEDERATION WHICH HAD STRUCK IN MID-FEBRUARY TO ACHIEVE FARE HIKES. THE ONE SUCRE FARE HAS BEEN IN EFFECT ALMOST 30 YEARS.

2. STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN TO THE STREETS SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS TO PROTEST PROPOSED INCREASES AND THE HIKES HAVE BEEN RESCINDED. THE GOE DECISION SPECIFICALLY EXEMPTED THEM FROM THIS INCREASE, BUT SUCH AN ACTION WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL IN PREVENTING THEIR PROTESTS.

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PAGE 02 QUITO 02174 042143Z

3. FOLLOWING STUDENT ACTION APRIL 2 MOST BUSES WERE WITHDRAWN FROM SERVICE. POLICE REPORTED ARRESTS AND SEVERAL INJURIES, TWO OF WHICH WERE SERIOUS. THE CHAUFFEURS' FEDERATION REPORTED SERIOUS DAMAGE TO A LARGE NUMBER OF BUSES BUT INSISTED THAT SERVICE WOULD BE NORMAL APRIL 3. HOWEVER, STUDENTS ONCE AGAIN ATTACKED BUSES AND SERVICE WAS QUICKLY WITHDRAWN.

NO REPORTS OF INJURIES ON APRIL 3 HAVE YET REACHED THE EMBASSY BUT POLICE USING RIOT CONTROL VEHICLES AND TEAR GAS WERE SEEN DISPERSING STUDENTS AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, ONE BLOCK FROM THE EMBASSY.

4. CONSULATE GENERAL GUAYAQUIL HAS REPORTED THAT THE CITY IS NORMAL AND BUS SERVICE, AT THE HIGHER FARE, IS BEING PROVIDED NORMALLY. HOWEVER, IT CAN BE NOTED THAT GUAYAQUIL SCHOOLS ARE NOT PRESENTLY IN SESSION, THUS STUDENT LEADERS ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO EASILY ORGANIZE PROTESTS.

5. COMMENT: FOR THE MOMENT THE POLICE SEEM TO HAVE THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND AND IT APPEARS THAT THE INCIDENTS CREATE NO THREAT TO THE GENERAL PEACE AND ORDER OR TO THE POLITICAL PROCESS CURRENTLY UNDER WAY IN THE COUNTRY. HOWEVER, TRANSPORTATION LEADERS ARE NOT INCLINED TO BACK DOWN ONCE AGAIN ON THIS QUESTION. MORE SERIOUS STUDENT INJURIES OR ARRESTS COULD CONCEIVABLY LEAD TO A MORE SERIOUS SITUATION.
CORR

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CIVIL DISORDERS, GROUND VEHICLES, PRICES, PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978QUITO02174
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780146-1102
Format: TEL
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780495/aaaadclq.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9b227db6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 QUITO 1009
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3080998
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PUBLIC DISORDER FOLLOWS BUS FARE INCREASES
TAGS: ELAB, PORS, PINS, ELTN, EC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9b227db6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014